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FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7486
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 0951
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 4806
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 9355

C O N F I D E N T I A L RIYADH 000118

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: SAG RESPONSE TO THE JANUARY 27 ARAB LEAGUE
MINISTERIAL MEETING DEMARCHE

REF: SECSTATE 7377

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Rundell
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Demarche delivered via diplomatic note on January 26 with the assurances from the Arab States department that it would reach the delegation attending the January 27 ministerial meeting in Cairo. It was also delivered in person on January 27 to Head of the Arab States Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Talal Malki.

¶2. (C) Regarding the Lebanese elections, Ambassador Malki told PolOff that the SAG agrees with our position on Lebanon, however, they remain very concerned with Syria's apparent involvement-- both in the elections and with Hizbollah. Malki confirmed that the SAG wants Lebanon to elect General Sleiman without delay and that the SAG has no preference as to how the cabinet positions are divvied up among the parties-- something left for internal politics only. Malki asked PolOff about USG position is Lebanon vis-a-vis Syria, and he requested a formal outline of USG policy on Syria's involvement in Lebanon. He remained hopeful that the Arab League Ministerial Meeting would apply the requisite pressure to the parties in Lebanon, and he felt confident that the issue would be solved before the Arab League Summit to be held in Damascus this March. He was not confident, however, that Syria's involvement would be limited by that time, which raised concerns over their lingering influence, and therefore Iran's increasing influence, in the region.

¶3. (C) Regarding the Gaza situation, Malki differed with the demarche, stating that Israel is one hundred percent at fault. He gave the analogy of a host locking his guest inside a sealed room without food, water, and electricity, and the guest breaking a window to escape. According to Malki, Hamas acted in the only acceptable manner in the wake of Israeli blockades against the Gazan population. He proposed that Egypt keep its border open and the USG send refugee assistance to aid in the flow of Palestinian refugees into Egypt, although he did not think that the SAG would raise this option in the meeting.

FRAKER